

**NASHVILLE METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

**August 26, 2021**

- I. **Call to Order:** The regular meeting of the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (Nashville MTA) Board of Directors was held at the Nashville Metropolitan Police Department, located at 5500 Charlotte Pike, Nashville, TN 37209 on Thursday, August 26, 2021.

Chair Carr Williams asked that we pause for a moment of silence to remember those that are less fortunate than ourselves and for all that is going on in Afghanistan and for those grieving the loss of loved ones.

- II. **Roll Call of Persons Present:** Gail Carr Williams, Chair; Janet Miller, Vice-Chair; Walter Searcy, Member; Secretary Margaret Behm; Chief Executive Officer Stephen G. Bland, Chief Administrative Officer Rita Roberts-Turner, Chief Financial Officer Ed Oliphant, Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke, Chief Development Officer Trey Walker, Director of Marketing & Communications Renuka Christoph, Director of Procurement & Business Diversity Amber Gooding, IT Manager Rob McElhaney and Sr. Executive Assistant & Board Liaison Monica Howse.

A quorum was established, and Chair Gail Carr Williams called the meeting to order at 2:32 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes:** Walter Searcy made a motion to approve the July 22, 2021 minutes. The motion was seconded by Ms. Janet Miller and unanimously approved by the board.

**Public Comments:** Chair Gail Carr Williams opened the floor for public comments. The public was reminded that comments were limited to three minutes.

**John Bull**

Mr. John Bull's public comments were as follows:

- Mr. Bull said that he takes no more than a couple of essential trips a week and he continues to wear his mask.
- Mr. Bull said that he attended the North Nashville Transit Center Community Meeting last Saturday in Council Member Taylor's district. He noted that Council Member Toombs was also present at that meeting, listening as she always does. He said that it was a very good presentation.
- Mr. Bull said that he was glad that WeGo was hosting a job fair at its Central office
- Mr. Bull said that he was looking forward to WeGo Link First/Last Mile presentation that will be presented today.
- Mr. Bull said he noticed a surplus in CARES ACT funding and an uptake in the future.
- Mr. Bull said that he appreciates all the work of all of the WeGo staff.

- III. **Operations & Finance Committee Report:** Walter Searcy introduced the following items for discussion and action:

- a. **Monthly Financial Report Compared to Budget (OF-D-21-022):** Chief Operating Officer Ed Oliphant reported and reflected on the statement of operations for the month of June 2021 compared to the budget and a balance sheet as of June 30, 2021. There was no further discussion at this time.
- b. **Monthly Operating Statistics (OF-D-21-023):** Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke reported and reflected on the monthly operating statistics report through June 2021. There were general

discussions regarding MNPS ridership now that schools are back in session. CEO Bland said that we're running about 1700-1800 a day. Chair Williams said that we could see another shift in ridership with this new Delta variant. Chief Operating Officer Andy Burke said that we're going to continue monitoring ridership over the next few months and keep reporting back to the Board.

- c. **Quarterly Route Performance Report (OF-D-21-024)**: Mr. Dan Freudberg reported and reflected on the Quarterly Route Performance Report for the months of April, May, and June 2021. There was no further discussion at this time.
- d. **Security Video Services Contract Value Increase (M-A-21-025)**: In August 2017, through a competitive request for proposals process, Eye-In-The-Sky was awarded a \$295,812 video security system contract with a five-year base term which included a 5% DBE Goal and five additional one-year renewal options. The base term expires in August 2022. The contract scope includes new installations, software licensing, equipment replacement and upgrades, and ongoing maintenance. The video security system supplements the 24/7 physical presence of security guards at WeGo Central (Central) and the Nestor and Myatt facilities. The system currently includes 205 cameras that cover the three locations to provide real-time monitoring and video documentation that can be used for post-incident factual assessments to support the WeGo Security and Safety departments.

The contract has a remaining balance of \$12,819. Planned expenditures in fiscal year 2022 include \$25,000 for ongoing maintenance, \$17,000 for the installation of video security at the Hillsboro Transit Center which includes \$2,200 DBE participation, and \$30,000 for video security for Central parking level improvements, totaling \$72,000.

Staff requested the Board to approve an increase of \$72,000 for the Video Security Contract, resulting in a not-to-exceed contract value of \$367,812 in order to maintain security video surveillance service needs through August 2022. The increase will be funded through a combination of operating and capital funds. Mr. Searcy questions the privacy implications of our on-board and facility surveillance systems, and the response of our employees to all this surveillance. Mr. Bland indicated that the camera systems are deployed in public facing areas of Authority property, that the systems have been beneficial in verifying appropriate employee conduct when complaints are called in by customers, and that off-hours staff in particular have expressed a desire for enhanced security measures such as the cameras and our security staff. Unrelated to MTA, Mr. Bland indicated that the RTA Board had recently approved a capital project to install these camera systems at our park-and-ride facilities.

Mr. Walter Searcy made a motion to approve the Video Security Contract. The motion was seconded by Ms. Janet Miller and unanimously approved by the board.

**IV. New Initiative & Community Engagement Committee Report**: Vice-Chair Miller introduced the following items for discussion and action:

- a. **WeGo Link First/Last Mile Pilot Project Update (NICE-D-21-010)**: Deputy Chief Operations Officer Dan Freudberg presented the following project update at the Board Meeting:

WeGo currently has a contract with Uber Technologies, Inc. to implement a first/last mile 'Mobility-on-Demand' pilot program connecting customers to fixed-route services, branded as WeGo Link. An additional service option for customers requiring wheelchair-accessible vehicles as well as those without credit cards or smartphones will be available through Mobility-On-Demand, one of WeGo's existing Access paratransit service contractors.

The pilot service will operate within the Antioch area of Davidson County, connecting customers to designated transfer locations along with Route 55 Murfreesboro. Trip costs will

be subsidized by WeGo such that most trips will cost customers \$2.00, the same as the current fixed route bus fare.

### **Recent Activities:**

Over the past few months, staff worked on developing marketing and communications materials, including the following:

- Program website
- Interactive zone map
- FAQs
- Program brochure (pocket guide)
- Bus stop/shelter signage
- Uber push notifications (issued to current app users)

While these materials were being developed, Customer Care and Communications/Marketing engaged potential beta testers via various means, including online/social media engagements, contacts with area Council Members, and onsite tester recruitment. WeGo also partnered with the Network for Sustainable Solutions (NSS), a local nonprofit, to provide program testing and feedback on a volunteer basis. To date, 15 users have downloaded the voucher (about half internal WeGo staff testers and half external), with five unique users taking a total of 13 rides.

### **Beta Test Feedback:**

All direct feedback received thus far from external testers has been provided by NSS testers. Feedback was generally positive, with most testers easily able to apply the Uber voucher, book a trip, and receive the appropriate discount through the app.

There were some areas of improvement noted by the NSS team. One was the pickup and drop-off locations for Uber, as there are currently no dedicated pickup or drop-off spots for rideshare at either location. Ideally, Uber would use the bus stop itself, but there is limited space for both a bus and another vehicle. Another issue noted during testing was that Mobility Solutions did not have vehicle availability on the day that NSS initially evaluated the program, so they were unable to test cash fares and wheelchair-accessible trip bookings.

### **Next Steps:**

Before moving ahead with a public launch, the project team will take measures to address the primary issues noted thus far during Beta testing. First, WeGo will work with Uber to set up virtual stops within Uber's platform that will automatically notify both riders and drivers of safe, off-street pickup and drop-off locations near each bus stop. Second, WeGo will coordinate with Mobility Solutions to ensure that they have the resources in place to support the program prior to go-live. Safe locations for wheelchair-accessible vehicle drop-offs have also been identified as close as practical to each bus stop and shared with Mobility Solutions.

Following these activities, staff will begin printing signage and other materials and set a target go-live date for public launch. This date will be set in coordination with Uber, which will then schedule push notifications to be sent via the app to customers in the pilot area on the launch date. We are currently targeting a go-live in coordination with Fall service changes.

There was no further discussion at this time.

## **V. CEO's Report:** CEO Bland reported the following:

1. CEO Bland thanked all the Board Members for the time they spent talking to Doug Eadie and generally helping to plan for our MTA Board Governance refresh. Janet, Gail, Margaret, and Mr. Bland met with Doug earlier this month to begin planning for our full-day workshop that we hope to hold by the end of the year, and we expect to wrap up a final outline to share within

the next month. Monica will be reaching out this week to look at additional dates we might schedule the session.

2. We continue to plan for the Fall service changes, which will be enacted on October 3. These changes will bring us back to our full pre-pandemic service level. Like most employers, we continue to face challenges in reaching full staffing levels. As of today, we are about 7% short of the fully authorized Bus Operator number for the October service increase. We do have several students in a new training class. The shortfall will continue into October, but Operations expects to be able to cover the service with overtime. However, it's highly unlikely we'll have access to the helper buses we've had throughout the pandemic, so we would expect our on-time and trip completion metrics to slip. Planned service expansion in March 2022 is a much larger concern, as we'll need 25 operators above the October number to reach that milestone.
3. One tool we will have at our disposal in recruiting is a substantially higher wage rate and shorter time frame to reach the top Operator rate. DTO completed collective bargaining with ATU Local 1235 earlier this month, and the new Collective Bargaining Agreement has been ratified by Union Membership and the DTO Board. The contract extends through June 30, 2024. As part of the overall agreement, and in recognition of our labor market challenges, the starting rate for new Bus Operators has been increased from \$17.56 to \$22.00, and the length of time to get to the top rate (which is now \$25.51) from 4 years to 3 years. CEO Bland acknowledged the efforts of the DTO Bargaining team, which was led by Bill Miller who had an extra incentive to get it done so he could fully begin enjoying his retirement! He also thanked ATU Local 1235 President Patrick Green (present in the audience) for a successful negotiation.
4. With respect to COVID status, we're all concerned by the rapidly accelerating rate of infection in the general population. Particularly concerning is the rate of infection among younger people. We have fully reinstated our bi-weekly COVID update meetings, led by Senior Safety Manager Nick Oldham. As of today, we had 5 employees off for COVID-related illness. As you may have heard, the Transportation Security Administration has extended the masking requirement on Public Transportation through at least January 18, 2022. With respect to ridership, we continue to see a slow, but steady, return of riders as Dan reported. With the return of in-person schooling, we are seeing an average of between 1,700 and 1,800 MNPS riders per day.
5. In prior months, CEO Bland reported that we're working with Metro on a collaborative Downtown Traffic Study. He said, yesterday we received 2 proposals for this project from Stantec and Nelson Nygaard, two highly qualified firms in the transportation and mobility planning space, so we're encouraged that we will have a good product and process no matter which way we go in selection.
6. Construction continues at the Hillsboro Transit Center, as our contractor splits time between our contract and finish up work on the High School. If you pass the site now, you'll see obvious signs of progress. We expect the facility to be substantially complete by the end of the calendar year.
7. Last month, you saw some of the early renderings for the North Nashville Transit Center. We have initiated public meetings to discuss the project with people in the neighborhood, and CEO Bland thanked Metro Council Members Brandon Taylor, Kyontze Toombs, and State Representative Harold Love for hosting a well-attended meeting at the North Precinct this past Saturday. We have several other forums scheduled in both in-person and virtual formats. In addition, we invited several dozen neighborhood and community stakeholders to participate in an advisory committee on elements of the center like public art and cultural programming, and 13 have accepted the invitation so far, representing a broad array of neighbors from the

business, social service, religious, educational, artistic and elected communities in the neighborhood.

8. Beyond our two transit centers in active development, we have engaged in very early-stage discussions for potential additional centers with the developers of two other high potential locations – the redeveloped Madison Town Center in Madison, and the proposed redevelopment of the Global Crossings Mall in Antioch.
9. Not unrelated to our discussion of transit centers, we have been engaged in several meetings with staff from the Housing Equity Fund established by Amazon to accelerate the maintenance and creation of affordable and workforce housing in their 3 primary markets – Seattle, Washington, DC, and Nashville. You will recall that, when they publicly announced this program, they highlighted the fact that they would be prioritizing investments in WeGo Public Transit's Frequent Transit Network corridors. Earlier this week, CDO Walker, CAO Roberts-Turner, and CEO Bland accompanied staff from the Housing Equity Fund – many visiting Nashville for the first time – on a bus tour of several transit center sites and transit corridors, specifically focusing on the North Nashville Transit Center and Dickerson Pike Corridor.
10. Several months ago, you authorized a contract with HDR Engineering to undertake an options assessment with respect to the future of our Nestor Bus Operating Facility. Last week, staff from HDR and their subcontractors conducted a planning workshop with WeGo Operations, Facilities, and Development Staff to discuss options and limitations; and to begin to narrow down options. This work is ongoing, and we anticipate it will consume significant space on the Board's policy agenda over the next year as we examine the future of this facility.
11. Advance work on the Nashville Department of Transportation's Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment Program is accelerating. In prior meetings, we discussed the city's success in obtaining these highly competitive funds to advance an intelligent transportation system in the Charlotte corridor. In addition to upgrading the overall transportation infrastructure through an advanced sensor, traffic signal, and traffic management technology; we'll be working closely with NDOT to include transit signal priority, and to experiment with advanced headway management applications that focus on bus spacing over schedule adherence in more frequent transit corridors that face rapidly changing traffic conditions.
12. Recently, CEO Bland sent an e-mail announcing Dan Freudberg's promotion to Deputy Chief Operating Officer for Systems. In this role, Dan will be heading up our participation in the NDOT project, as well as supporting Andy Burke and our Operations Team in applying more analytical techniques, systems, and appropriate technology to various aspects of operations management ranging from fleet maintenance to control center operations, to paratransit scheduling and dispatching. Supporting Dan and Andy in this function will be Bryan Williams, who was recently promoted to Performance Oversight Manager. In this role, Bryan will continue to oversee the deployment and operation of our QuickTicket System but will play a larger role in overall Operations Analytics and performance management. Both promotions are well earned.
13. On the RTA side:
  - a. We met with the 4 consulting firms who provided responses to our request for information to advance next-level planning for the WeGo Star commuter train. Based on these discussions, we will be preparing a full Request for Proposals to do a more defined examination of the options we have for the Star moving forward.
  - b. Transit Now Nashville conducted their first "in-person" event since the pandemic, with a ride on the Star to Donelson Station, and some transit conversation and socializing at Phat Bites in Donelson. CEO Bland said that he was pleased to be invited and to attend the

event, which was very well attended. Among the 30 or so attendees were 3 of the 4 Metro Council Members in the Star service corridor.

- c. At the risk of excluding other RTA services, we anticipated the delivery of 10 new buses for RTA commuter services. Of the 10 new buses, 7 will be assigned to the MTA for service it operates in the Rutherford County corridor.
- d. Finally, after a 1-year hiatus, we are reinstating the Titans Express train to all home Tennessee Titans games this year. This is a partnership with the Titans, who will hold the RTA harmless on overall expenses after accounting for ticket sales.

**VII. Chair's Report:** Chair Williams reported the following:

Chair Williams thanked Mr. Bull for his faithful attendance and his input at the MTA Board meetings. She also congratulated Mr. Dan Freudberg on his promotion and said that he continues to do great work. Lastly, she acknowledged Mr. Patrick Green, President of the Amalgamated Transit Union, and congratulated him on his work and approval of the bargaining agreement.

Chair Williams concluded by saying, we are in uncertain times, and we don't know if we'll have ten riders or none, but thanked the staff for all of their hard work, and she encouraged everyone to continue to be safe and continue to do good work. She said that the Board Members are always available to support the staff in any way.

**VIII. Other Business:**

- IX. Adjournment:** With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

**Attested:**

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**Gail Carr Williams**  
*Chair*

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**Margaret L. Behm**  
*Secretary:*